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Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

30th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 27 September 2011, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

In the absence of The President, Mr. Thomson (Fiji), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.20 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Libran Cabactulan, chairman of the delegation of the Philippines.

Mr. Cabactulan (Philippines): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election and to offer the Philippines' full support for his leadership in this sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

Our collective experience as one United Nations has brought into focus the reality that only when nations work together in firm and determined resolve can we begin to address the many difficulties that confront us. Two global wars exposed our vulnerability to leaders and nations that do not hesitate to use violence to resolve disputes and underscored the need for an international system to govern the behaviour of States.

That is the rules-based framework that underpins everything we want to build, raise and do as one United Nations. That framework — built on our shared values and common aspirations — provides the way by which we can effectively move together as one global community towards our common objectives. For the Philippines, therefore, this session's theme — "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means" — is most relevant and opportune.

A rules-based system will work in a sustained manner only if the rules themselves are based on principles of justice and equity. Recent events across the globe, particularly in the Middle East, have shown us that individuals rise together for what they believe is just and equitable. Individuals clamour for the rule of law based on equity and fairness. When they realize the injustice of repressive and iniquitous rule, they do not hesitate to bring effective and positive change.

We must continue to work to eliminate nuclear weapons and curtail the illicit trade in conventional weapons and in small and light arms in order to preserve peace and our very existence. The successful 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons showed the collective resolve of States parties to move further forward in ridding the world of those weapons. We have already agreed to convene a conference by 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The holding of that conference will take us closer to our goal.

To build peace, we need to provide and strengthen conditions that encourage the full progress and prosperity of all nations and peoples. We must ensure that international trade and development support that end. The Philippines therefore calls for a fair, open and rules-based multilateral trading system

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and the conclusion of the Doha Round. We must likewise redouble our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The target date of 2015 is upon us and much work remains to be done.

Mr. Archondo (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Philippines is one of world's 17 mega-diverse countries and has a great stake in ensuring that global biodiversity is protected and maintained. We have been described as the epicentre of global marine biodiversity, and we host the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Center for Biodiversity. As we look forward to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development next year, we join the call for a more powerful expression of the entire world's political commitment to sustainable development.

With the human person at the core of all our efforts, we must always strive to uphold human dignity and human rights. That holds true for migrant workers. The Philippines has close to 10 million Filipinos overseas, contributing to global socio-economic development. In line with the rules-based approach, the Philippines supports the establishment of guidelines that would ensure the welfare of all migrant workers.

Additionally, we must renew our resolve to address the evils of human trafficking. The Philippines is a founding member of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking, an informal association of United Nations Member States that seeks to help reinvigorate and consolidate the global fight against trafficking in persons. At the core of the initiative is the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Aside from establishing rules to protect migrant workers and to prevent human trafficking, the global community needs to explore measures to more effectively assist developing countries in evacuating their nationals in instances of disaster or internal conflict. The Philippines also supports efforts at the United Nations to enhance partnerships, including with private sector actors, in strengthening the international humanitarian and emergency response system.

The Philippines recognizes that the promotion and protection of human rights are of vital importance to securing peace and socio-economic development, promoting the rule of law and strengthening democracies. The Philippines Government likewise recognizes women as agents of socio-economic growth and change, and thus strongly advocates their full participation in nation-building.

The Philippines is pleased to announce that, on 30 August, we deposited our instrument of ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. This was an historic moment for my country and my people. We have stood up against the impunity of colonial rule and of a dictatorship. Now, we stand together with the rest of the world in saying "never again" to impunity in any corner of our world.

Firm in the desire to contribute to global efforts to safeguard the world against impunity, the Philippines has fielded a candidate for election to the Court, Ms. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, an experienced trial judge and international legal scholar with a distinguished and long career in public service. We ask all our partners and friends to support her candidature.

As we look to strengthen the ramparts of peace, we recognize the important role and contributions of United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The Philippines stands ready to do its part to ensure that the lines of peace are fortified and continuously expanded. The Philippines lauds the heightened interaction and dialogue among the Secretariat, the General Assembly, the Security Council, troop- and police-contributing countries and other key stakeholders in the global peacekeeping agenda.

As we strive to reinforce peacekeeping operations on land, so too should we continue to exert efforts in maintaining stability and security at sea. Maritime piracy, after all, imperils the lives of seafarers and disrupts global trade. Today, around 70 Filipino seafarers are still being held hostage by pirates operating in the Gulf of Aden and the wider Indian Ocean. We must continue to work diligently to counter these sea pirates, who have no place in our modern, civilized world.

To strengthen the international rules-based regime, the Philippines advocates reforming the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, to make it more resilient, relevant and responsive. The record shows that it is only the Philippines that has presented specific drafts resolutions concretely setting forth proposals on the five key issues: categories of membership, question of the veto, size of the enlarged Security Council and working methods, relationship

between the General Assembly and the Security Council, and the question of regional representation.

Terrorism continues to cast its dark shadow on all of us. The decapitation of terrorist organizations has not put an end to terrorism. We need to address the root causes and conditions that turn individuals with so much passion into beasts that know nothing but violence to achieve their ends. Among many things, we need to further examine how economic disenfranchisement, intolerance and radicalization contribute to the growth of terrorist groups.

The rule of law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), is the key to finding solutions to disputes over conflicting claims in the West Philippine Sea. As we prepare to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of UNCLOS next year, let all States parties remember not just our rights, but also our obligations, for the rule of law is the bedrock on which the growth and development of our community of nations is built. Adherence to the rule of law provides stability and certainty in the conduct of relations among States. In a world defined by unequal distribution of economic, military and political resources and might, the rule of law is the great equalizer, ensuring that rights are protected and responsibilities complied with. Adherence to the rule of law prevents conflicts. In instances of dispute, particularly of a territorial nature, the rule of law ensures a peaceful settlement and resolution.

The rule of law has guided the Philippines in all its actions as a responsible member of the international community. The Philippines realizes that only when the rule of law prevails can all stakeholders and the world benefit from a region of such importance strategically and in terms of resources. We adhere to ASEAN's 1992 Manila declaration on the West Philippine Sea and the 2002 declaration on the conduct of parties in the West Philippine Sea. We call on other parties to do so as well. We also welcome the efforts and support of other stakeholders in working towards a lasting, just and peaceful solution to the conflicting claims in our region.

Allow me to conclude by saying that underpinning the success of all our efforts in the United Nations is adherence to the rule of law and a rules-based international system. Out of the horrors of war, we have resolved as one global community to build and strengthen the ramparts of peace and development. Those ramparts, strong as they may be, can easily disintegrate when even just one nation behaves contrary to the rules and norms we have all agreed to abide by. It is our obligation as individual sovereigns States and as a collective global community that all nations, large or small, behave responsibly through the adherence to the rule of law and a rules-based regime. Only then can we hope to enjoy the benefits of our world and live together in greater peace, progress and prosperity.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vince Henderson, chairman of the delegation of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

Mr. Henderson (Dominica): On behalf of my delegation and the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of Dominica, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, and to assure him of our full cooperation. We are confident that with his skills and experience, he will bring leadership to this Assembly as it addresses the extensive and important agenda of this sixty-sixth session.

I also extend a special welcome to the newest member of this Assembly, the Republic of South Sudan, which became the 193rd Member of the United Nations in July.

I would also like to convey Dominica's appreciation to Mr. Al-Nasser's predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, for having so ably guided the proceedings of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. We also express our gratitude for the continued efforts of His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon and for his leadership at this most challenging time.

This meeting is being convened at a time of tremendous global insecurity. Never in the history of humankind have we had to struggle for our own existence as we have done in this past decade. We are still faced with unstable global financial markets, issues of food availability and affordability, increasing unrest in some regions and the high cost of energy, and we seem set to endure the mounting consequences of Mother Earth's response to decades of global warming.

Countries like Dominica, located in the Caribbean Sea, are again in hurricane season, a period

of high vulnerability that we in the Caribbean experience for a period of four to six months each year. Fresh in our minds are the recent unfortunate events that took place in the eastern United States. For the first time in its recorded history, the city in which we are convened came to a complete standstill because of Hurricane Irene in late August.

We in the Caribbean understand clearly the challenges faced in the aftermath of hurricanes, as these are the kinds of disasters that small island States such as Dominica are forced to routinely schedule on our calendar of events and brace for every six months. For us, each year's recovery efforts could become next year's destruction point. On behalf of my delegation, I extend my condolences to and empathize with all those who were affected by Hurricane Irene.

For reasons such as these, each year we come before this Assembly to report on the deterioration not only of the environment, but also of climate change negotiations. With full knowledge that these impacts are projected to increase over time, we believe that we can build on a number of outcomes agreed to in Cancún. We also believe that although some responses might not meet every Member State's expectation, they could act as catalysts and springboards for new approaches and new solutions in Durban.

As witnesses to environmental degradation at a time when reliance on the ecosystem to provide energy for basic needs continues to intensify, we as a people cannot continue to ignore the subject of climate change. We believe that climate change is an energy-related issue and that the provision of reliable, accessible and affordable energy and its by-products are critical to sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Despite unfulfilled promises and a slow start to fast-start funding, we must report on actions advanced since Cancún that have helped position the small island developing States (SIDS) to transform their energy sectors. Specifically, I refer to the SIDS Sustainable Energy Initiative, also known as SIDS DOCK.

Almost 30 SIDS have signed an agreement to establish this initiative, created by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) under the chairmanship of Grenada and in partnership with the Government of Denmark, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. We wish to thank the Government of Denmark for its significant financial contribution to operationalizing this facility and for the leadership that it has given and continues to give to the process. My delegation expresses its gratitude to the other members of AOSIS for staying the course and reaffirms Dominica's commitment to the initiative.

SIDS DOCK was the outstanding outcome for SIDS at Cancún, and, as we set our sights on Durban, the expectation is that other partners will support the initiative, which is set to transform the energy sector in SIDS. It is our hope that sufficient progress will be made in negotiating appropriate measures that might be implemented to address the losses and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including impacts related to extreme weather as well as slow-onset events.

These two initiatives are within the framework of the Bali Road Map and Action Plan and reflect actions that are geared towards the fulfilment of commitments and giving effect to the Cancún decisions.

It is no secret that the Kyoto Protocol is in serious trouble. While it represents less than 30 per cent of greenhouse-gas emissions, it remains the only legally binding global agreement in our quest to address the growing threat of climate change. In order to build on the gains made under the first commitment period, we must ensure that the broad principles secured in the Kyoto Protocol are maintained in any legally binding global agreement at Durban.

A sustainable energy sector is the foundation for sustainable development in small island States such as Dominica. For the past decade, Dominica has been working towards the development of our geothermal potential, with the assistance of international agencies and development partners.

With the support and contribution of the European Union, the Government of France and the Regional Councils of Guadeloupe and Martinique, we are now closer to the realization of our goal. Preparation for drilling has begun, and the three test wells will be complete by the end of 2011.

The development of our geothermal potential will provide us with the capacity to meet our domestic needs and supply electricity to our neighbouring islands, especially the French territories of Guadeloupe and Martinique, through our connection via submarine cables. With this displacement of hundreds of megawatts of fossil-generated power, coupled with our

sustainable development practices, Dominica's target is to be not only carbon-neutral but also carbon-negative by the year 2020.

Like Dominica, many SIDS are pursuing their own renewable-energy initiatives. However, unsustainable debt burdens and lack of technology have made such initiatives almost impossible for some SIDS. We invite other developed countries and international institutions to join the Government of Denmark in SIDS DOCK and the Government of Norway in its "Energy for all" initiative, by providing the critical support that SIDS so desperately need.

We in the SIDS are committed to playing our part; suffice it to say, however, that there are still some major obstacles impeding the pace of progress, particularly financing for SIDS-appropriate technology and transfer. As part of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) process, Dominica calls on the Secretary-General to establish a special SIDS-appropriate technology fund to address the issue of innovative financing for sustainable energy technology transfer and development for small island States. In that regard, we also ask that the Secretary-General consider appointing a goodwill ambassador tasked with advocating on behalf of SIDS and helping the Secretary-General in supporting the Fund. The effective transfer and development of SIDS-appropriate technology is essential for SIDS to build resilience to the present and future impacts of climate change.

In addition to looking forward to securing a renewed political commitment for sustainable development at Rio+20, the SIDS expect that the international community will reaffirm their support with the new and additional resources required to implement the programmes and activities agreed to, from Agenda 21 to the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

Any renewed commitments and agreements reached at Rio+20 must address the major impediments to implementing these summit outcomes, including the limited technical, financial and human resources, as well as the impact of exogenous factors, particularly the global financial crisis.

There is no denying the importance of national security to a society; thus the unregulated, non-standardized and highly dangerous trade in arms and ammunition poses great threats to law and order in our societies. The Caribbean region is not a manufacturer of arms or ammunition, yet large quantities of illegal firearms and ammunition often associated with the illegal drug trade are transferred across our borders, infiltrating our society and causing mayhem and death, overburdening our health-care system and contributing to the destabilization of economic progress and well-being. The region has lost some of its most productive members to this unregulated transfer of arms. This is an unsustainable situation for any country, but even more so for small island States.

Negotiations on an arms trade treaty are welcome, and, as stated in the Caribbean Community Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Dominica is committed to full and active participation in all efforts related to the issue of small arms. Of particular importance is the 2012 review of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as the 2012 United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty.

In the absence of these and other initiatives to help combat global insecurity, threats to global peace and security will continue to multiply in both intensity and form. Multilateralism must take centre stage in the struggle to deal with these challenges. The work of the United Nations is therefore paramount in maintaining world peace and security. In its maintenance of this role, the United Nations must be able to clearly demonstrate legitimacy and fairness in its actions, cognizant always of the need to protect the most vulnerable.

The ability of the Security Council to adequately respond to new and changing world dynamics rests with its acceptance of the need for continuous reform to adapt to the times, including a recognition of the increase in size of the United Nations membership and global economic power shifts. Reform reflects more than representation and, in this situation, should promote adaptation to the needs of Members and the drafting of strategies that would contribute to ending wars and halting disputes.

In that regard, we welcome Mr. Al-Nasser's proposal of "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means" as the theme for the high-level debate at the opening of this session of the General Assembly.

Earlier I spoke of the threats which plague mankind in this era of globalization. I also highlighted the need for multilateralism and for cooperation between and among States. These challenges can be overcome only in a global environment where there exists respect for one another's territorial integrity, non-interference in one another's domestic affairs, respect for sovereignty and the right of self-determination. It is in this context that we again call on the United States of America to discontinue its economic blockade against the people of the Republic of Cuba.

I also welcome the support of the President of the Assembly in keeping our sister island of Haiti on the global stage. There are few words left to describe the dire misery in which our brothers and sisters in Haiti are living. The paralysis of reconstruction and development activities has been the hallmark of the aftermath of the earthquake that devastated that country in January 2010.

We recognize the tremendous challenges to the reconstruction efforts and wish to thank those countries, institutions and individuals who have contributed and continue to contribute towards this process. We again call on those who have made pledges to make good on their commitments in order to accelerate the reconstruction efforts.

The presence of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) remains critical to the reconstruction efforts by providing security and support to the people of Haiti. We therefore urge the Security Council to extend the tenure of MINUSTAH to facilitate the efforts of the new Administration of His Excellency President Michel Martelly.

We all accept that it is critical to collectively address the impact of climate change, to resolve conflicts throughout the world and to enhance peace and security for humanity. All these efforts, however, will be of little value to our peoples if we are not able to ensure that they are healthy. The United Nations has shown exemplary leadership in dealing with the fight against HIV/AIDS, together with its partners. This same leadership must now be given to the fight against non-communicable diseases.

The frightening statistics of 2008 issued by the World Health Organization, which estimated that 36 million deaths worldwide were due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs), suggests that this phenomenon is not unique to any one region and therefore cannot be downplayed. NCDs pose one of the greatest challenges to the health and development of Dominica, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the rest of the world. The severe impacts of non-communicable diseases continue to place tremendous pressures on our health-care systems, productivity and already overburdened and struggling economies.

It was for these reasons that the CARICOM Heads of Government issued the Port of Spain Declaration in 2007 to promote healthy lifestyles and to combat NCDs in our region. Prior to and since the declaration, the Dominican Government has adopted a national policy on NCDs. We have further implemented a number of measures as part of our multisectoral efforts to include education; the strengthening of our primary health-care system with the contribution of our partners, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Republic of Cuba; the promotion of healthy lifestyles; greater access to treatment and free health care; and appropriate legislative and policy changes. The Government of Dominica endorses the leadership taken by the Caribbean Community in this regard. We remain committed to the well-being of every citizen.

We join our CARICOM colleagues in thanking the United Nations Member States and Secretariat for convening the successful High-level Meeting on NCDs. We look forward to the implementation of the Political Declaration (resolution 66/2) and call on the developed countries to partner with us in our various efforts to combat NCDs.

Finally, Dominica wishes to reaffirm its confidence in the United Nations system as the ultimate negotiating and deliberating body for addressing major challenges confronting the world. The Assembly can count on Dominica's commitment to working in close collaboration with the United Nations agencies and respective Member States to strengthen the mission of this body. We cannot overemphasize the fact that, notwithstanding its many limitations and imperfections, the United Nations system is critical to maintaining world peace and security and an international humanitarian system. The world today is a much better place because of the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Donatus Keith St. Aimee, chairman of the delegation of Saint Lucia.

Mr. St. Aimee (Saint Lucia): Not since the prelude to the two world wars have there been so much uncertainty and anxiety within the international system. The sands are indeed shifting, as the President of the Assembly stressed at the opening of this sixty-sixth session (see A/66/PV.1).

The shifts in the struggles for freedom and the struggles for rights, some of which we in Saint Lucia take for granted; the shifts in the number of natural disasters that devastate country after country; financial meltdowns, increases in the price of energy and food, and food shortages have all converged and met at a moment when the challenge to cope weighs upon us all. However, the weight carried by a small island State bears down like an elephant on an ant, and although the ant is capable of carrying many times its own weight, it would never choose to carry an elephant.

The current world economic and financial situations are not of our making but they affect us more than anybody else. It continues to confound us how the States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), with the exception of Haiti of course — small island States like us, with limited resources, limited populations, limited land mass and small economies — can be classified as middle-income. With that classification, we are not eligible for special arrangements in finance and trade. There must be something wrong with that classification. We continue to argue that the methodology employed for such categorization puts small island developing States (SIDS) at a great disadvantage in terms of receiving favourable aid and trade packages, thereby adversely affecting our development strategies.

The continued attrition of trade preferences at the multilateral level challenges our very small — and, I reiterate, very vulnerable — economies and requires our Governments to employ creative structural arrangements and adjustments and fiscal exercises to keep our economies afloat. The present application of the terms of trade and conditions of aid are very unfavourable to us.

Emphasis therefore has to be placed on the consideration of a balanced approach to foreign investment and environmental integrity, and investors must not place undue pressure on small States. Rather, there should be an understanding of our challenges and our willingness to work in a win-win situation. Favourable mechanisms for finance and technology transfer would enable small island States to take advantage of the benefits that these offer as prerequisites for sustainable development. This is all we ask, nothing more — a chance to claim our part.

We stress our vulnerability to natural disasters and their disproportionate effect on small island economies, and we seek rapid and meaningful response mechanisms at the regional and international levels in order to enable our vulnerable economies to recover as quickly as possible. Almost every year, gains made during the first half of the year are eroded in the last quarter by weather-related phenomena.

Saint Lucia is still recovering from Hurricane Tomas, which struck the island in October 2010. Let me take this opportunity to thank those who contributed so generously to our recovery. Of course, we will still accept any generous contributions.

Saint Lucia, like other SIDS, recognizes the vital role that oceans play in national and global economic development. In light of this, the Government of Saint Lucia remains committed to ensuring the sustainable development of both coastal and marine resources.

For a number of years now, Saint Lucia has had legislation in place that speaks to effective fisheries management with laws on open and closed seasons for certain fisheries such as lobsters and, in order to prevent the capture of juvenile fish, mesh-size limits for nets and fish-trap fisheries. The Government is also targeting large pelagic fish and other species not traditionally harvested by local fishers, in order to reduce pressure on coastal and reef fishing. In addition, a number of marine reserves and marine management areas have been established, with the most well-known of these being the Soufriere Marine Management Association, which has been used to inform the establishment of other marine parks within the Caribbean and, I may add, globally.

The President took the Chair.

The Government of Saint Lucia has adopted an institutional framework for integrated coastal zone management and is working towards ensuring its successful implementation through a Caribbean coastal zone management unit and a coastal zone management advisory committee.

I dwell on the issue of oceans and seas because the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise are real to SIDS, and Saint Lucia, through a number of projects and programmes, is seeking to build the island's resilience to these impacts through the formal adoption of a national building code and the development of environmental impact, physical planning and development regulations.

Nevertheless, Saint Lucia has recognized the importance of having access to data and models at the national and local levels in defining and informing the country's response to climate change, and in this regard is taking a number of steps to build the requisite database by working with various national, regional and global organizations.

The Caribbean Sea is an important international shipping route for both tourism and trade. Considered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to be a biodiversity hotspot, the Caribbean Sea is and will remain our livelihood. It keeps us afloat, but it can also drown us if we do not manage it properly; that is what seas do. It therefore needs special attention, and our Government is promoting an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea area in the context of sustainable development. We therefore support the work of the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme, and we hope that funding will be made available to that programme to enable us to achieve our goals.

For all these reasons, Saint Lucia would like to call on the international community to ensure that there is a strong focus on oceans in the preparatory negotiations for the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). We cannot forget the importance of oceans to SIDS in providing energy and food security, and to the world as a whole in regulating our climate. Oceans are a regulatory mechanism for climate.

As countries worldwide prepare for the Rio+20 Earth summit, we note that the green economy is a major theme for discussion. Renewable energy and energy efficiency are at the heart of the green economy. Petroleum giants like British Petroleum and Shell are now turning to investments in solar and wind energy. Countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Brazil have positioned themselves as strong proponents of renewable energy. Sustainable energy technologies have been and continue to be a subject of significant research and development, with very promising results.

At the policy level, a number of countries, including my own, have articulated noble and ambitious energy policies to steer us into the future. In negotiations taking place pursuant to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, climate change mitigation is inextricably linked to sustainable energy development and continues to generate much debate as State parties seek to find lasting solutions to the problem of greenhouse gas emissions.

But while the United Nations endeavours to promote equity and equality among individual countries, our capacities are not the same. Countries like ours yearn to enjoy the benefits of sustainable, renewable energy sources, but despite having significant potential for renewable energy, we have not yet been able to meaningfully develop these resources. It is therefore imperative that the international community take decisive action to assist small island States, isolated as we are, in achieving energy security through renewable energy and energy efficiency programmes. Financing is a critical element in the development of new and renewable forms of energy.

So far, SIDS have largely been overlooked, as investments are made in larger economies where greater economies of scale and profits beckon. Even with the existence of avenues such as the clean development mechanism, which should also promote sustainable energy projects, the results have not been very encouraging for SIDS. We hope that, not too long from now, that situation may change.

We applaud the efforts and resources put into the conservation and preservation of the world's forests to reverse desertification. We think, however, that considerable attention should also be given to what I term "small stands of trees" in our small island States. Although we call them forests, to those who have very large forests they are small stands of trees, but they are important to us because they are critical and crucial to soil fertility and therefore guarantee production and productivity in agriculture, thereby promoting food security and the alleviation of poverty.

Similarly, Saint Lucia welcomes the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing and is grateful to the Government of Japan for providing an implementation fund for developing

countries. We see that as a great opportunity to help our communities to benefit from their biological resources and the traditional knowledge associated with them, so that they too can play their role in the conservation of biological diversity. In accordance with the declaration of 2011-2020 as the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, we urge all countries to work closely together to conserve biological resources, for the present day and posterity.

The recently concluded High-level Meeting on non-communicable Diseases provided an opportunity to deepen relations and collaboration with Member States, regional and international agencies and development partners, and to share technical expertise, best practices and resources as we continue to strive to meet clearly defined goals and objectives. As a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which spearheaded this initiative, Saint Lucia wishes to place on record its appreciation for the commitment of all Member States, United Nations agencies, particularly the World Health Organization, and other interested groups in addressing the scourge of non-communicable diseases. We nevertheless need to set targets, implement programmes and measure success if we are to make progress beyond just another meeting.

Saint Lucia, like all of the other CARICOM member States, is grappling with security threats engendered by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and trafficking in narcotics. The associated rise in crime and violence involving the use of firearms has had a significant adverse effect on the socio-economic and human development of our countries. Saint Lucia will therefore spare no effort in working towards concluding an arms trade treaty that is legally binding, robust and comprehensive; contains the highest possible standard for the transfer of conventional arms, including small arms, light weapons and ammunition; is effective in regulating the arms trade, particularly in preventing diversion; and is universal in subscription.

Saint Lucia welcomes the Republic of South Sudan as the most recent member of our community and wishes it progress, peace and prosperity. We look forward to welcoming the State of Palestine to this body after successful negotiations have been concluded. That is our hope.

The anachronistic, half-century blockade imposed on the people of our neighbour, Cuba, suffocates that people's right to prosperity and progress. The outdated mechanism's illogical application does not fit twenty-first century geopolitics, economics or humanitarianism. We therefore add our voice to others that have spoken before us in calling for an end to this blockade and to all limitations on the rights of the Cuban people to progress and prosperity.

In the spirit of the greater good, we are pleased that, since 2009, Taiwan has been able to participate in the World Health Association (WHA), in recognition of the fact that global health issues require universal participation and cooperation to overcome those major problems that affect the peoples of every corner of the globe.

Sustainable development, like health, is one of those issues that require global participation and cooperation. Taiwan is a leading economic and technological powerhouse and can contribute substantially not only to health but to a range of global issues that face the world today. We urge the United Nations to find suitable means to permit Taiwan to participate in its specialized agencies and mechanisms, including the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change all of which have worldwide implications, along the lines of the WHA model. Surely, 25 million people living on planet Earth can contribute to this body of peoples.

In conclusion, the shifting sands are revealing an international system on the brink of change. We are at a moment when a decision taken here in this great Assembly will reverberate throughout history. Decisions taken here can create a State or divide a State; they can bring peace or bring renewed conflict. The theme for this general debate — "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means" was well chosen. Let it guide our work this year and beyond.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Carsten Staur, chairman of the delegation of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Mr. Staur (Denmark): First of all, I would like to align myself with the statement made by the President of the European Council, Mr. Herman van Rompuy, on behalf of the European Union (see A/66/PV.15). Denmark appreciates the adoption earlier this year of

resolution 65/276, giving the European Union (EU) the opportunity to address the General Assembly at this juncture of its deliberations. The Lisbon Treaty marks a new phase of European cooperation that will benefit the United Nations as well.

The past year has once again demonstrated how quickly events can unfold and how unexpected crises can break out in different parts of the world. These include a violent conflict in Côte d'Ivoire before a democratically elected president could finally take his rightful place; devastating earthquakes and tsunamis in Japan, followed by nuclear contamination; the current and still more severe humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa; and Pakistan being struck by overwhelming floods.

There have also been events of historic proportions that are still unfolding in North Africa and the Middle East. From Tunisia to Egypt, from Libya to Syria, from Bahrain to Yemen and beyond, people are demanding their rights and their freedom. They are standing up for core human aspirations and values. They want to shape their own lives, economically and politically. Theirs is a call for political participation, for freedom of speech and for the right of peaceful assembly; a call for dignity, for accountability, for justice and for jobs. It has sparked hope for a better life for the people of the region. The international community, with the United Nations in the lead, has a strong responsibility to support these historic aspirations.

The winds of change currently sweeping across the Middle East and North Africa have confirmed once again that the desire for freedom, democratic reforms and respect for human rights is universal. A few days ago, countries met under the auspices of the Secretary-General to express their admiration for the courage of the Libyan people in their struggle to take control of their own future. Denmark is proud to have supported the legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people and to have contributed to the protection of the lives of Libyan civilians.

A few days ago, the Assembly welcomed the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the representative of Libya. Being here today with the NTC in the seat of Libya is tangible evidence of the progress achieved by the Libyan people in determining their own destiny. Along with the international community, Denmark continues to support the aspirations of the Libyan people. It is encouraging that the Security Council has now authorized a new United Nations Mission to support Libyan national efforts.

Developments across the Middle East and North Africa make it clear that in the twenty-first century, Governments must be politically accountable, respect people's rights and dignity, and deliver economic opportunities. The only credible response to those legitimate popular demands is sustainable political and economic reforms.

Unfortunately, we sometimes witness countries fail to live up to their responsibility and obligations as members of the international community. As we speak, events continue to unfold across the region, including in Syria. More than 2,600 people in Syria have died during the popular uprising. We strongly condemn the violence and the killings of peaceful demonstrators. It is high time to respect the right of peaceful protesters and their legitimate demands. To increase the pressure on the Syrian regime, we have adopted sanctions and hope others will join us.

Some of the prerequisites for a sustainable transition to a flourishing democracy are free, fair and transparent elections, free media, the protection of minorities, a functioning government and an independent judiciary that upholds the rule of law. Democratic change must come from within. It has to be home-grown and based on local leadership, ownership and participation. Surely, this does not exclude international assistance, including from the United Nations.

Afghanistan has come a long way since the fall of the Taliban regime. We hope that Afghanistan will take yet another step in its transition process at the upcoming Conference in Bonn in December. Moving towards 2014, the United Nations system, in close cooperation with the Afghan authorities, will also have to undertake a thorough review of its activities in Afghanistan in order to continuously maximize its contribution to good governance, anti-corruption and sustainable socio-economic development.

What we see around the world is not only a call for political reforms; it is also a call for inclusive economic development, for jobs pure and simple, and for improved standards of living. And not least, it is a call from and about youth. Governments will need to strengthen economic and social reforms, ensuring that

they generate inclusive growth and shared prosperity for all and not just for the few and already privileged.

The Millennium Development Goals have succeeded in galvanizing action, not least in health and education, and all countries have a joint obligation to ensure that the goals we agreed in 2000 will actually be fulfilled by 2015. The development challenge is pressing in sub-Saharan Africa, a region long marked by poverty and conflict, but in recent years also characterized in many countries by strong economic growth and optimism.

National ownership and clear political commitments remain the keys to success. But for many of the poorest countries, development cooperation continues to be an important tool and a catalyst in their efforts to ensure that the poorest people will also be able to enjoy the full potential of globalization. Denmark is doing its part to assist, based on a sound track record in international development cooperation. We are one of only five countries which at present fulfil the internationally agreed development goal of delivering at least 0.7 per cent of gross national product as development assistance. We would like to welcome others to this "point-seven" club.

We shall not succeed, however, without focusing in particular on countries affected by conflict or fragility. We especially look to the United Nations to coordinate efforts in those countries. That is where the United Nations can make a real difference.

The advancement of women's equality and the empowerment of women are important aspects of this process. We welcome the creation of UN-Women and look forward to working closely with that new entity in the area of gender mainstreaming. No less important is the issue of sexual and reproductive health and the rights of women.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, presents a unique opportunity to revitalize the discussion and understanding of sustainable development. Rio+20 will be an opportunity to put sustainable development at the top of the global development agenda.

Denmark welcomes the focus on green economy and the institutional framework for sustainable development. Transitioning to a green economy is necessary if the world is to cope with the multiple challenges of resource scarcity, poverty eradication and climate change. Economic growth will be crucial in the decades ahead, but it will have to be green. Today, 1.4 billion people are without access to modern sources of energy. Universal access to energy will contribute to lifting hundreds of millions out of poverty.

Poland and Denmark, as part of the EU trio presidency for 2011 and 2012, are working jointly to strengthen the green growth agenda and contribute to the global objective of sustainable development, in accordance with the trio presidency programme. Next month, Denmark will host the first Global Green Growth Forum in Copenhagen. The Forum will lend new momentum to public-private cooperation on concrete initiatives that will inspire regulatory interventions, remove key barriers and identify opportunities and solutions for a renewed push to advance green growth globally.

Earlier this year, we witnessed the birth of a new State as we welcomed the 193rd Member of the United Nations. The Republic of South Sudan is the fulfilment of the democratically expressed will to self-determination by the overwhelming majority of the South Sudanese people. We congratulate the people of South Sudan on their historic achievement.

The Palestinian cause and quest for statehood are high on the agenda here in New York, and rightly so. The present regional context reminds us all, including the two parties, that direct political peace negotiations must now be resumed. Within a specific time frame, they must produce a lasting peace and an end to conflict based on the two-State solution, with both States living side by side in peace and security.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General on his appointment to a second five-year term. We have all been inspired by his tireless efforts in the field of peace and security and human rights and by his strong leadership on climate change and sustainable development. At a time when the United Nations is ever more relevant, Denmark lends its full support to the Secretary-General and to his stewardship of the Organization. The challenges we face call for international resolve and for joint action. In the Secretary-General's own words, "We need results that people can see and touch, results that change lives and make a difference" (*A/65/PV.101, p. 9*). That is why we turn to the United Nations.

That is the end of my prepared statement, but I am aware that I am the last speaker in the general debate of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. Let me therefore also take this opportunity on my own behalf — and I am sure also on behalf of speakers before me — to thank the conference service staff and the interpreters for their tireless efforts and long working days, which have facilitated this unique international debate.

The exchange of views that we have during the general debate allows each and every one of us a privileged glimpse into the positions, the values and the political priorities of all 193 Member States. The debate provides a strong and clear indication of what issues really engage Governments. It demonstrates what parts of the very broad United Nations agenda each and every Government is most preoccupied with, what their concerns are and which outcomes and solutions they seek. From this debate, we get a unique and straight look into the soul of global politics. It helps us understand each other, including when we disagree, and it informs our work together in the Assembly in the months to come.

So we may congratulate each other on a job well done, now at the end of the debate, but it is only the beginning. The true value of this debate will be seen only later, and it will depend on all of us coming together to find common ground and workable solutions.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

Several representatives have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kohona (Sri Lanka): This statement is made in exercise of the right of reply to the remarks made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada in the general debate on 26 September (see A/66/PV.26).

The Sri Lanka delegation is deeply anguished by the remarks made by the Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. John Baird, despite our extensive efforts to keep the Canadian delegation in Geneva informed of the reasons for and background to Sri Lanka's objections to the Canadian initiative on an interactive dialogue on the lessons learned and reconciliation commission process in Sri Lanka at the March 2012 session of the Human Rights Council, including domestic mechanisms put in place. The Sri Lankan objections have been endorsed by a wide cross-section of members of the Council.

In the United Nations, an Organization comprised of 193 countries that subscribe to a range of social, economic and political philosophies, procedure and process are critically important to ensuring good governance and equity and to preventing intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations from being abused for narrow, domestic political advantage and selective application of principle. The rule-based framework of the United Nations system, which we all value, must be safeguarded for the protection of all against such abuse.

Mr. Nazarian (Armenia): I have asked for the floor to exercise my delegation's right of reply to the statement made by the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister this morning (see A/66/PV.28). The references in that statement to Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh can be attributed only to the imagination of the speaker, who still presumes that cold war-style propaganda and repeated anti-Armenian statements at the United Nations can be an effective tool for strengthening his country's position in the ongoing efforts of the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group to find a comprehensive — I repeat, a comprehensive — and peaceful settlement to the Nagorno Karabakh issue, and not the step-by-step solution referred to by the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister.

That statement revealed that the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, while preaching adherence to international law, has apparently taken it upon himself to single-handedly interpret — or rather, misinterpret — the United Nations Charter and statements made by the Armenian President and the Minsk Group co-chairs on the field assessment mission to the territories surrounding Nagorno Karabakh.

It is regrettable that Azerbaijan is once again misusing and misinterpreting the field assessment mission report, as it did in 2005, to justify its militaristic rhetoric and move the discussions on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict to other formats. Azerbaijan's own interpretation of the report

contradicts the explanations and recommendations presented earlier by the Minsk Group co-chairs.

The accusations contained in the statement by the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister are not only baseless and counterproductive but, more importantly, they endanger the negotiation process. First of all, none of the four Security Council resolutions on Nagorno Karabakh contains a single word on the so-called Armenian aggression. On the contrary, it was Azerbaijan that first launched a large-scale armed offensive against the civilian population of Nagorno Karabakh in response to the peaceful and constitutional expression of the will of its people to exercise their right to self-determination.

Secondly, the aforementioned resolutions do not contain a word about the withdrawal of Armenian military forces from Nagorno Karabakh. That is simply because they have never been there.

Thirdly, the defence army of Nagorno Karabkh controls only 8.5 per cent of Azerbaijani territory, which serves as a security buffer zone, as opposed to the 20 per cent quoted in the statement of Azerbaijan. Moreover, Azerbaijan itself controls 15 per cent of the territory of Nagorno Karabakh.

Finally, the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister claims that there are 1 million refugees in the country — a figure that does not correspond to any official data provided by international organizations. Such exaggerations and distortions of facts and figures undermine the work of the United Nations and other international forums, artificially delaying constructive steps to meet the needs and alleviate the suffering of the people of Nagorno Karabakh. Even if Azerbaijan is misleading its own people's public opinion by distorting facts, it cannot do so to the international community.

Armenia has always supported the settlement of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh through the exclusive use of peaceful means, and has repeatedly proven that in practice. Armenia has given a clear answer to the latest version of the basic principles proposed by the three co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group as a basis for negotiation of the settlement. If Azerbaijan is willing to agree unequivocally to it, it will be possible to see progress in the settlement process.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): I would like to exercise the right of reply to the remarks made by the representative of Armenia. Those remarks represent yet another piece of evidence that testifies to Armenia's apparent disregard of its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law, and also demonstrate how far that Member State is from being engaged in a constructive search for peace in the region.

It is curious that the delegation of Armenia — the country that bears primary responsibility for unleashing the war of aggression against Azerbaijan, carrying out ethnic cleansing on a massive scale, committing other heinous crimes during the conflict, and advocating an undisguised racist ideology — should attempt to criticize my country and lecture it on issues pertaining to such notions as peace, human rights, negotiations and conflict resolution.

The delegation of Armenia must be well aware that what it considers to be the exercise of the right to self-determination by the Armenian ethnic minority living in Azerbaijan has been unequivocally characterized by the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as by other authoritative international organizations, as the illegal use of force against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and other egregious violations of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The illegality of the separatist entity and its structures established by Armenia on the occupied territory of Azerbaijan has been repeatedly pointed out at the international level in the most unambiguous manner.

The Government of Armenia, which has purged both the territory of its own country and the occupied areas of Azerbaijan of non-Armenians, and has thus succeeded in creating a mono-ethnic culture there, should be the last to advocate the unilateral secession of ethnic minority groups from sovereign States.

The remarks of the delegation of Armenia have not deviated from the usual speculations and misinterpretations as to the true value and content of the conflict settlement process and mediation efforts. Intensified attacks over the past month on Azerbaijani civilians and civilian objects across the front line, and an unprecedented increase in hostile statements by the Armenian leadership — full of historical falsifications and factual distortions concerning the root causes of the war and the conflict settlement process — have

confirmed the validity of our serious concerns about the destabilizing effect of Armenia's policy, and represent a direct threat to peace, security and stability in the region.

We are confident that Armenia's destructive political agenda is fated never to be realized. Armenia will be obliged to cease its provocative policy, to ensure that its occupation of Azerbaijani territory is ended, to renounce its territorial claims on neighbouring nations, and to establish civilized relations with all countries of the region. Azerbaijan sincerely believes that there is no alternative to peace, stability and mutually beneficial regional cooperation.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in exercise of the right of reply.

I will now offer some concluding remarks on the general debate.

Statement by the President

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Now that we have come to the end of the general debate of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, permit me to express my sincere gratitude for members' participation in this open, constructive and comprehensive dialogue among world leaders.

Before making my statement, I cannot fail to express, on behalf of the General Assembly and on my own behalf, our deep sadness and shock at the death of Ms. Wangari Maathai of Kenya, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate. I offer her family and the people and Government of Kenya our sincere condolences.

This has unquestionably been a historic and memorable debate. Many Member States have acknowledged the hope we have felt as we have watched so many transformations taking place around the world whereby people have actively questioned and challenged their governing regimes. World leaders have praised the courage of those who have fought for freedom, dignity and democracy, and made it clear that Governments cannot oppress their peoples without being held accountable.

We have also welcomed new leaders who have come to this Hall to convey their countries' hopes and needs. Those leaders have called on the international community to help them fulfil the aspirations of their peoples to establish the rule of law, achieve transparency and economic prosperity, uphold justice and respect human rights. In this context, I should be remiss if I did not encourage the international community to stand united in support of the transformational process of the Libyan-led transition.

We have also witnessed the renewed hope and determination of the Palestinian people. In a truly historic moment, President Mahmoud Abbas announced that he had submitted an application to the Secretary-General for Palestine's admission to the United Nations. The Security Council is now considering the issue, and the General Assembly will follow suit if that is what Member States decide.

In general, I have been impressed by the fact that a majority of international leaders have called for a just and comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East aimed at establishing two viable, sovereign and independent States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Building on that consensus among nations, it is my hope that at this session we will be able to mobilize our efforts for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in accordance with the terms of reference and international law.

As we gather now to consider such complex issues, it has become clear that the role of mediation is enjoying unprecedented importance. With regard to the theme of this year's general debate "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes", many delegations have welcomed the theme and underscored the increasing importance of the role of mediation and prevention of disputes, in accordance with the United Nations Charter. Member States have shared various examples of mediation efforts in their regions. They have acknowledged that mediation is a cost-effective tool and that regional and subregional organizations play a vital role in the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Member States have also noted that the effective participation of women in mediation efforts is absolutely vital, and that the increased involvement of civil society is also important and needed. In addition, widespread support has been expressed for the Secretary-General's efforts in conflict prevention, and calls made for United Nations capabilities in that respect to be enhanced. As President of the General Assembly, I will give high priority to mediation in the coming year.

I have also welcomed the substantive discussions on the peaceful settlement of disputes and by the fact

that many Member States have raised issues related to the other priority areas that I have identified for this year. (see A/66/PV.1)

On United Nations reform and revitalization, we have heard many calls for continuing comprehensive reform of the United Nations so that it truly embodies the spirit of universality and can more effectively address the ever-changing global landscape. With its unique legitimacy and unparalleled convening power, the General Assembly should proactively address major and emerging global issues in a forward-looking manner.

There is broad agreement on the urgent need for early and consensual reform and expansion of the Security Council. Such reform is inevitable if the Council is to reflect our current realities and be more representative, inclusive, democratic and transparent. I would like to strongly urge Member States to revitalize that reform process, to reaffirm their commitment to the reform of the Security Council, and to generate the political will necessary to proceed in that effort in a timely manner. I believe if any process is to succeed, it must be based on the will and resolve of Member States.

With regard to the topic of improving disaster prevention and response, Member States have also emphasized the importance of international cooperation in disaster prevention and recovery. Many Member States have expressed their serious concern about the humanitarian crises plaguing the Horn of Africa. They have identified these as a major threat to stability and prosperity in the region. At this session, Member States should draft a resolution aimed at improving disaster prevention and response. This is a significant opportunity for the membership to clearly demonstrate its commitment to addressing the grave humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa. As President of the General Assembly, I am fully committed to focusing the attention of the General Assembly on that humanitarian crisis.

On the two issues of sustainable development and global prosperity, Member States have acknowledged the need to work cooperatively and to reflect creatively, in particular since the world's population will reach 7 billion inhabitants next month. A common topic that has emerged during the debate is the pressing need to rethink the global approach to sustainable development, which should include the consideration of issues such as energy, water and food security.

We have also heard repeated calls for redoubled efforts and enhanced resolve to achieve progress in attaining the Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development will provide a significant opportunity to consider new strategies for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

Many Member States have also called on the United Nations to address climate change by supporting the different countries concerned and their efforts to adapt to its effects, and for developed countries to address their emission reduction targets. The seventeenth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Durban this year, will also provide an opportunity to make progress in that respect.

With regard to the ongoing global economic and financial crisis, there has been general acknowledgement of the central role and broad legitimacy of the United Nations in providing solutions to the global challenges of governance. During the debate, many Heads of State and Government have called on the United Nations to take the leading role in reforming the world economic and financial order.

Various other important issues have also been raised during the general debate. Member States have noted the importance of providing adequate financial and human resources to the United Nations, as well as the need for shared financial responsibility and fiscal discipline. There has also been broad support for the Secretary-General's measures for United Nations reform.

Many delegations have reaffirmed that international peace and security can be best served through the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Maintaining the highest nuclear safety and security standards has also been underscored. I encourage Member States to step up their efforts to revitalize the United Nations disarmament machinery and to promote negotiations on new disarmament instruments within the Conference on Disarmament.

We should now turn our attention to the next crucial step, namely, the implementation of our commitments, in particular those of the General

Assembly. That is the most important element of our work since it is the actual translation of words into deeds. I will focus, in particular, on the full and effective implementation of the relevant programmes of action adopted by the General Assembly in the interests of threatened and disadvantaged States.

On the context of our shared responsibilities, we should be eager to achieve consensus and to adopt sustainable solutions to major world challenges. I will be steadfast in my commitment to working closely with each and every member so that we may strengthen our efforts towards a united global partnership. In heeding the calls made by Member States during the general debate, I will also strive at this session to focus attention on South-South and triangular cooperation, as well as on dialogue among civilizations and advancing the culture of peace.

Permit me to end on a more personal note. As I said at the opening of this session, I consider the members of the Assembly to be my family and my friends. I will therefore rely on their full cooperation in the year ahead. I truly believe that the spirit of friendship and open dialogue that has characterized our relationship will play a vital role in implementing the agenda before us during the year.

Coming together is only the start. Working together, we will complete our task.

(*spoke in English*)

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 8?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 7.50 p.m.